

GAYLAXY

Empowering eXpressions



FARSI: A Lost Language of Gay Delhi

A photograph of two shirtless men with dark hair and beards. They are wearing white briefs and are posed close together, with one man's arm around the other. They are looking directly at the camera with serious expressions.

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IN INDIA

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Editor's Note

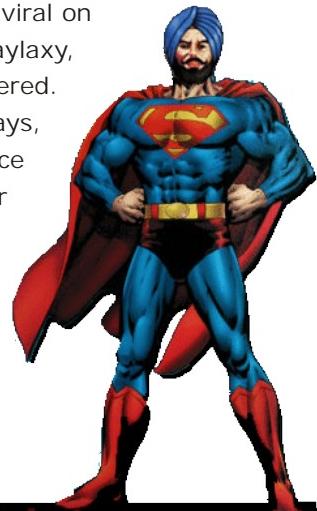
Internet and mobiles have changed the way we communicate and interact with each other. While it has made life definitely easy, especially for gays and lesbians and changed forever the rules of dating and cruising, a vast majority of the internet generation youth is unaware of the methods and signals that were developed by gay men in the 70s and 80s to communicate. While some of these methods/signals that were followed in the West is still known, very little is recorded/known about the techniques followed by Indian gay men. In our cover story, Dr. Himadri Roy talks about one such technique developed by gay men in Delhi to communicate with each other without raising suspicion. Farsi- the Persian language whose words have merged with Hindi- was adapted by gay men in the city. Dr. Himadri also writes about other interesting phenomenon like the Red Rose Table at Indian Coffee House. Hopefully, the cover story will acquaint our readers with a history that isn't yet well documented.

Our neighboring country Pakistan held general and assembly elections on May 11th. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, transgenders, or Khwaja Siras, contested the elections. Sachin Jain talked to Bindiya Rana before the elections and reports about the challenges they face while contesting and the issues on which they fought the elections. Bharathi writes about the significance and impact that the marriage equality sign had in America, while André Jénnings interviews Ravi Batra, a gay rights activist of South Asian descent in America.

Film festivals and pride marches have arrived. Kashish returns this May and promises to be even bigger and better, while people in Chennai would have two different film festivals doting them within a span of one month. Kolkata, Chennai and the rest of the world have already started preparing for gay pride march.

Last month had a very sick gay rape joke going viral on social media too. After we [reported](#) about it on Gaylaxy, the post was [taken](#) down and an apology tendered. Inside, I write about why it was wrong to link gays, rape and cricket. Abhishek Divyam writes back once again about problems of a homosexual teenager and wonders where the gay teens are after all? We also supported the Chandigarh Pride, which was held on 15th March for the first time. Inside, you get some glimpses of the pride in the city.

With pride season setting in, we will have a lot to cover in the coming issues. Until then, *Ciao!!*



Sukhiman

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Farsi: A Lost Language of Gay Delhi

Dr. Himadri Roy provides interesting insights into how the mode of communication of LGBTs in Delhi changed between 70s and 90s

Farsi is supposed to be the communication code amongst the LGBT community of Delhi. It is said to have originated during the rule of the Sultanate Dynasty in Delhi, with Hijras (who enjoyed the privileged position of controlling harem) using Persian. However, during the British rule, intermingling of the Hijras of the community was restricted due to the strict imposition of Section 377, which had made homosexual practices a criminal offence. It was during this time that the hijras germinated the seed of Farsi to keep themselves protected.

The purpose of protecting oneself continued even after independence. It was during the rise of the Communist party ideology that the language was revived again. As the contemporary political scenario was totally different, people were more open to new ideologies. This gave birth to a phenomenon called the "Red Rose Table".

In the early 1970s, a table in the Indian Coffee House situated in Mohan Singh Place, Baba Kharak Singh Marg of Connaught Place, was chosen as a mode of identity. But it was no longer a domain for Hijras alone, the whole LGBT came together to discuss about identifying themselves in seclusion with the usage of Farsi. It was then the modern form of Farsi became the mode of communication. Very interestingly, as "red" represented the colour of communists, onlookers usually considered that probably they were discussing something political. Most of their discussion forums were socio-cultural and psychoanalytical. This developed in a very fast pace but soon disappeared with the emergence of the new term AIDS during the 80s. Soon this "Red Rose Table" became a historical past.



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Cruising areas developed gradually in several parts of the city from parks of North to South Delhi, from the East to the West Delhi. Soon, with changing times, public loos were also used as cruising places for more widespread choices. Amidst all these explorations, the risk factor of security still haunted the LGBT crowd. So the usage of Farsi really brought a tremendous sense of satisfaction amongst the LGBT people. The time unfolded so fast that by the first half of the 90s of the last century, NGOs started doing their part of duty to protect men who had sex with men. As a part of the job profile, they needed to acquire this language, and this acquisition led the NGO workers to perform their duties in a more prolific manner.

For instance, if a bisexual partner was seen by his gay sexual partner in a park with a girl, then the former would exuberate his angst in his sentence, *"Harami giriya ka bachha, aane de aaj. Niharan ke saath chipakna bandh nahi kiya toh meri bhi naam Nirmal nahi!"* [Bastard top, let him come today. If I can't stop him from mixing around with his girl friend then I'm also not Nirmal]. Note here few things, first of course the angst is shown in the usage of abusive word 'saale', then note the noun 'giriya' it simply means 'the person who penetrates his male sexual partner' and the word 'niharan' meaning 'a girl'. But very interestingly, this syntactical structure not only throws light on the angst but also a sense of jealousy and self-pride of sexuality.

Farsi died and decayed slowly as time passed by. First the AIDS-phobia and later globalisation, both strangulated it to death and people who considered themselves as educated were the first losers of this linguistic battle

As with every language, Farsi also had a subtle difference between the first language speakers and the second language speakers. The first language speakers were considered to be the privileged ones who were sure about their sexuality and knew exactly what they want out of their sexual partner, whereas the second language speakers were those who tried to explore various means of sexual pleasure and were perplexed about their own sexuality. As their characteristics varied, so did their intonations of linguistic communications.

The former category had more strength and fluency than the latter. The latter would very necessarily mix the position of the verb and that would affect the connotations of the syntactical structure.

It's very important to note that Farsi, like any other language, also has nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech. Interestingly, the syntactical structure is that of the common Hindi language speaker, not of that which relates to Persian. It developed a typical colloquial communication skill. The LGBT community continued with this skill of communication for a long time safely.

Nouns like *panthi, koti, niharan, dhurani, jogta, danga* were used with simplicity to mean the 'man' in a gay relationship, the 'woman' in a gay relationship, the girl friend of the gay partner, the gay partner who has a girlfriend, the 'female' in a lesbian relationship, and the 'man' in a lesbian relationship, respectively.



The first two were used for gays, the third and fourth were for bisexuals and the last two were for lesbian people. Even the genitals also were talked about very openly in Farsi like the penis was termed as *lickum*, or the breasts were termed with fruits, a huge breast would be termed as *nariyal* (coconut) and small-size breasts were called as *anardana* (pomegranate seeds).

Verbs were always used to complete the sentence, like *kartali* used for clapping hands, or *nath utarna* used for losing virginity. Adjectives were rampantly used to talk about genitals mostly and the physical and sexual depictions, for instance, *aadiyal* means big, or *nathi* means small. Hence if someone says, '*meri panthi ka toh adiyal lickum hai*' means 'my man has a big penis'. *Chissa* was used to mean someone having a smooth or silky body.

But with the impact of globalisation, the socio-political scenario in India changed drastically and Delhi being the capital city of the country, the consequences were so vividly rapid. One such consequence was the emergence of cyberspace. People who were first or second language speakers but considered to be educated and learned, gradually stopped venturing into cruising areas. So the usage of Farsi saw a big blow from the educated LGBT people.



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The form of communication through Farsi converted immediately into internet communication modules and the conversation thus became abbreviated form of English. The exclusivity and the uniqueness of Farsi as a mode of communication of the LGBT community lost its glory and halo. The following is an example of communication in a social networking site of LGBT cyberspace:

```
X: Hw r u?  
Y: f9. u say?  
X: asl?  
Y: 22/male/Del  
Y: n u?  
X: 23/male/Del  
Y: Top or bot?  
X: Vers. N u?  
Y: Bot.  
X: place?  
Y: Yeah! Bt only betn. 2-6pm. Wil tht b f9?  
X: Sure. 2day.  
Y: wow! Gr8!  
X: leave ur add.  
Y: B2B 1406/D, SFS Flats, Mayur Vihar I.  
X: C u thn at 2-2:30.  
Y: Wil wait 4 u.
```





Farsi: A Lost Language of Gay Delhi

Very interestingly, abbreviated English has been used today by everyone as the sms language. Anyway, few of the words like *asl* simply means age/sex/location, *top or bot* or *vers* was once *panthi* or *koti* or *dhurani* when farsi was spoken and used as a means of communication. As one can notice, cruising has shifted from public loos and parks to cyberworld. LGBT community feels much more secured today into this cyber mode of communication. At the very onset it was just a group chat in particular rooms of cyberspace, but as time rolled by it shifted to exclusive LGBT social networking sites. But the motive remains the same- looking for sexual gratification. At the beginning it might be a blind-date but latter with technological advancement, it became very obvious as pictures and photographs could be uploaded by anyone having an account in the LGBT networking sites.

In the early 1970s, a table in the Indian Coffee House situated in Connaught Place, was chosen as a mode of identity... The whole LGBT came together to discuss about identifying themselves in seclusion with the usage of Farsi.

As a matter of fact, Farsi died and decayed slowly as time passed by. First the AIDS-phobia and later globalisation, both strangulated it to death and people who considered themselves as educated were the first losers of this linguistic battle. Today, when the history of this language is delved into, the remnants might be excavated from those people who were part of the LGBT community from the 1980s. They still know the language very well, and in some cases may be communicating very fluently in an exclusive meeting of groups or friend circle. Beyond them, the Hijras still continue to use it as their mode of communication. As a consequence, Farsi the exclusive language of LGBT community returned back to square one. The way it started from the domain of the Hijras went back to them again.

Dr. Himadri Roy is an Associate Professor in the School of Gender and Development Studies, Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi.

The Third Voice in Pakistan's Elections

Sachin Jain reports about transgenders contesting the elections in Pakistan

In 2011, a historic Pakistan Supreme Court ruling ordered the Government to issue CNICs (computerized national identity cards) and voter identity cards to the approximately half-million-strong Pakistani transgender community. As a result, Pakistani hijras, known as 'Khwaja Siras' have been able to contest elections for public office for the first time ever this year. The Pakistani General and Assembly Elections on May 11, 2013 have seen 7 transgender candidates, all independents, file their candidacies: Lubna Lal (PP-26, Jhelum, Punjab Provincial Assembly), Resham (NA-105, Gujrat, National Assembly), Sanam Fakir (PS-1, Sukkur, Sindh Provincial Assembly), Bindiya Rana (PS-114, Sindh

Provincial Assembly), Naina Laal (PP-33, Sargodha, Punjab Provincial Assembly), Nargis Bibi (Multan), and another candidate in Karachi. Assuming they all stay in the race, they still constitute a mere 0.03% of the approximately 23,000 candidates.

In a part of the world where religious ideology and centuries-old traditions often seem to be at loggerheads with the ways of modern democracy, fighting established political parties with deep pockets and a lot of clout seems like an even more uphill battle for these independent hijra candidates. But they refuse to be cowed down. They believe that their mere candidature takes a stand for equal rights for



Khwaja Siras in Pakistan



Pakistani transgenders campaigning for their candidate

everyone in Pakistan.

Their lack of funds has necessitated very down-to-earth campaigning strategies: door to door visits, and an engagement with basic issues: digging sewage canals, paving bazaar streets, electricity, gas, water and soaring prices. This development-focused electioneering culture is also what many in India are clamouring for, fed up of votes sought on divisive bases like religion or caste. In Pakistan, too, this focus on development is struggling to assert itself in a debate that often gets dominated by ideology, religion, dynastic politics and the baggage of history.

Khwaja Siras also appeal to both a voter fatigue with the status quo, and a latent desire to break rigid binaries. As they tell voters: "Since neither men nor women have solved your problems for decades, we humbly request you to give us a chance". Unwittingly enough, the extreme polarization of rigid societal gender roles between men and women has led to the 'third gender' being ascribed a midway point of 'neutrality', and even 'objectivity'. Though they hold a visible place within local religious and cultural traditions, the daily

discrimination, ridicule and lack of education that they face makes one wonder how successful this marginalized community can be in the face of *jaati-* and *biraadari*-based vote-bank politics.

They are sometimes patronized, and made fun of, in sections of the electronic media, for their inability to articulate informed positions on issues of national import like terrorism and foreign policy. The tendency is to treat them as an endearing if not serious side-show amid the oft-dreary heat and dust of sub-continental electoral politics. However, frustration with the impunity of the ruling class, and the apathy of the educated elite, has meant that the public is giving them an increasingly sympathetic ear. But will political parties take them seriously? None of them even mentioned the 500,000+ transgender community in their manifestos. Fighting provincial and national elections seems like taking the first baby steps towards enforcing change from within a hitherto-oblivious political system.

Khwaja Siras tell voters: "Since neither men nor women have solved your problems for decades, we humbly request you to give us a chance"

The LGBT community's relationship with electoral politics has been complex and difficult everyone. Due to overwhelming heteronormative and patriarchal systems, achieving comfort as a gender or sexuality minority has invariably meant distancing oneself from the mainstream. However, political engagement requires precisely the opposite –a negotiation with the very system that queer people often turn their back on. Yet, the last two decades has seen astonishing successes - like that of Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, the world's first openly lesbian head of government who became Prime Minister of Iceland in 2009. Within the trans community, Georgina Beyer became not only the world's first transsexual mayor in Carterton, New Zealand, in 1995, but also the world's first transsexual Member of Parliament in 1999.



Bindiya Rana

In India, hijras were officially recognized as a "third sex" in 1994. They now have the option of identifying as Eunuch "E" on passports. However, up until now, both in India and Pakistan, candidates were forced to identify as either 'male' or 'female' – resulting in the disqualification of hijra candidates in elections in 2008 and 2009. Encouragingly, there has been progress –the government of the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu established a transgender welfare board in 2008, to look at a wide range of TG rights issues including inclusion under the census, college admission forms, food ration cards etc. Indian electoral politics too, is no stranger to hijra candidates. Shabnam Mausi (Shabnam Bano) made history in 1998 by being India's first hijra to be elected to public office. She won from the Sohagpur constituency in Shahdol-Anuppur district, she served her term in office in the Madhya Pradesh legislative assembly till 2003.

These winds of change are now blowing in Pakistan as well. One Khwaja Sira candidate in these elections who typifies this positive and optimistic attitude, is Bindiya Rana. For the last five years, she has been a founding

member and President of Gender Interactive Alliance, Karachi. It is an organization working in the area of HIV/AIDS awareness and outreach and equal rights for Pakistan's transgender community. Intelligent, poised and articulate, Bindiya talks about the unique turn her life has taken, thanks to contesting the elections, with candour, pragmatism and a disarming sense of humour. Any hint of condescension that a sceptic may have about her, on account of entrenched biases about hijras as mere singing and dancing caricatures, evaporates on listening to the informed stand that she takes on local development and policy issues.

Born in Lyari, Karachi on August 14, Bindiya is the third-eldest in a family of 7 sisters and 4 brothers and studied till Class 8. "My family had an idea about my gender from the very beginning. They were very concerned that I should not get on the wrong path," she says, recalling how she used to like wearing make-up and dressing up as a girl as a child. On one occasion, her teacher grew angry because she thought that Bindiya was mimicking her *lachak* ('swish') while walking!

While in her teens, she joined her guru and became her *shagird* (disciple). "I would go with my guru to weddings or when children were born, and sing and dance, and take "vadhaaiyaan" (money given on auspicious





occasions). When I went to search for work, people would look at me and laugh. I would say to myself, "How do I explain to these people that I too am normal, just like them?" she tells.

Bindiya is contesting the Sindh Assembly elections, being held with the Pakistan General Election on May 11. Her constituency PS-114 consists of Azam Basti, Akhtar Colony, Kashmir Colony, Defence View, Manzoor Colony, Mehmoodbad, Ashraf Colony and Chanesar Goth. Roads, drinking water, proper sanitation, schools are some of the things on her agenda. "I myself am a part of the lower class of society always struggling to make ends meet. So I understand people's problems and have helped them, unlike politicians who come once to ask for votes and then don't show up again," she says. She hasn't forgotten her own community of Khwaja Siras either. "As a Khwaja Sira, I would like to see the Supreme Court orders, languishing for 5 years due to political inaction. This would ensure progress

of my community."

Bindiya knows that there are many challenges she has to face. The first one she overcame when her nomination papers were accepted, after having been rejected earlier. "The reason given (for rejection) was that I had not submitted my original passport and identification, however these were with a travel agent at that time. I challenged this in court. They accepted my position and upheld my nomination." Her fellow Khwaja Siras are supporting and campaigning door-to-door for her. The response of people, especially women, has been encouraging.

Bindiya says she will continue to work for her constituency even if she loses the election. She looks up to Mother Teresa for her humanitarian work. "Just as she had spent her entire life serving others, I too would like to follow in her footsteps." To the transgender community in India, her message is "Come, let us all raise our voice together for TG rights. Let us pay attention to our education, so that we do not remain backward in society. Do not lose courage, keep on the struggle for your rights. In our countries, two big challenges for the transgender community are lack of education and unity. But the biggest problem is getting rid of attitudes entrenched over centuries. We need to end this discrimination so that people see us and treat us as equally."

To her nay-sayers, she says:

Baad-e-Mukhalif se na ghabraa, aye auqab!

Yeh toh chalti hain tujhe ooncha udaane ke liye.

["Don't be frightened by these raging winds, o eagle!

They only blow to make you soar even higher in the sky."]

How Change Happens

Bharathi writes about the significance of people changing their profile pictures on Facebook to Marriage Equality sign

People who were in USA experienced something historic in March. The Supreme Court heard arguments in two cases which could decide whether same sex marriage is legal all over America. In those two days something unprecedented happened. I woke up that week and when I logged on Facebook I saw that almost all my friends had changed their profile picture to a red equal sign. My Facebook feed, my friends list and my posts were all a sea of red. Later I realized that Human Rights Campaign has posted that image on their Facebook page and asked supporters to change their profile picture to that red equal sign to show support to marriage equality. Little did anyone know that within 2 days that image would go viral and a majority of people, both gay and straight, had their profiles changed to that red equal sign.

It was a very small act, it was not going to influence the Supreme court's decision on how they are going to rule.



But what it did to people like me and thousands of other LGBT people was that it showed that the world has changed.

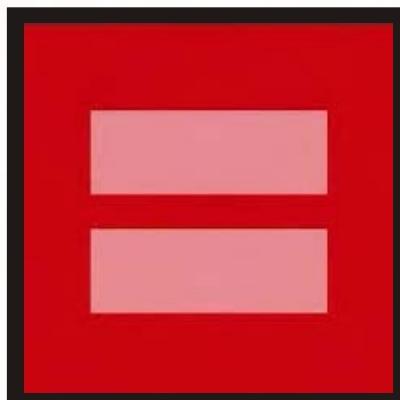
It is becoming a better place for everyone to live. For a young man from India who had no idea what gay meant when I was growing up, confused and scared, this small act meant a lot. Today kids growing in various parts of the world grow up knowing acceptance and love. They are growing up realizing that people are fighting for some minority, about whom people felt shy even to talk about a few years ago.

If I was a scared gay kid still in the closet and was feeling hopeless and one day just logged on into my Facebook profile and saw that red equal sign among all of my contacts, it would have meant that I don't have to be afraid anymore. It would have meant that those people in my friend list were going to accept me for who I am and still love me.



The arguments in the Supreme Court against same sex marriage were absolutely ridiculous for anyone watching it. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg delivered a blow when she questioned the lawyer arguing against same sex marriage and asked, "How can you say that same sex couples are treated equal when they are being denied almost 1100 benefits which their straight counterparts have through marriage?" making gay marriage seem like skim milk marriage, an analogy which is going to stick for a while.

When the opposition said that marriage is for procreation, Justice Elena Kagan made a remark asking that, "... in this country, straight people over the age of 55 are allowed to get married. But I do not see any children coming out of their marriages. So how can you say that marriage is for procreation?" There was a moment even when Justice Anthony Kennedy the more conservative justice said, "There are some 40,000 same sex couples raising children in California. This injustice is causing a direct harm to those children by saying that your parents cannot get married."



Whatever the ruling is going to be; those arguments proved that opponents didn't have a compelling argument against marriage equality other than immense dislike towards gay people. News channels here in USA were filled with news about those historic Supreme Court arguments.

Today everyone here knows someone who is gay; so this issue is something that is personal to them. Gay people have come out and have put a human face to gay rights

A recent poll came out saying that majority of Americans support Marriage Equality and most importantly, 80% of young people less than the age of 30 support marriage equality. Literally, the opposition for same sex marriage is dying. A majority of senators were falling over themselves to change their stance and said they support marriage equality.

This monumental change in the minds of Americans came not by political power or some magic. It came because gay people came out and told their stories.

Today everyone here knows someone who is gay; so this issue is something that is personal to them. Gay people have come out and have put a human face to gay rights. These are not

some third person issue for many people.

Gays are everywhere, we are doctors and engineers; farmers and teachers and construction workers. We are their sons and daughters; fathers and mothers and their neighbors. Once they know that we don't have horns and we are just like them it moves people to accept us and makes them stand with us and fight for us.

Forty years ago Thea Spyer and Edith Windsor got engaged but Edie could not wear a ring because she was in the closet. So she wore a circle of diamonds as a pin on her coat every day for the rest of her life. Last month eighty three year old widow Edith Windsor stood on the steps of the highest court in her country and said, "Today, I am an out lesbian who just sued the United States of America and it is kind of overwhelming for me."

This change happened because of ordinary gay people who started coming out and in that process changed the world.

Rachel Maddow summed it up nicely in her news segment calling it a historic week for gay rights.

"When you walk out under the night and look up you are seeing some stars that are relatively close up ... but you are also seeing some very far way stars; stars whose light comes from so far away to get to us that it is pretty old light by the time it gets to us; so old that the star that made that light might



actually be gone by the time you are seeing it. What you are actually seeing is the imprint of something that has long gone.

There are all sorts of people and all sorts of fights that technically are not still around. But those fights live, and we can see them. We can see their light in some of the biggest-deal and most difficult things that we do today.

Whether or not you see equal rights for gay people as your particular fight- whether or not you even agree with that particular fight- this was a really big historic week for that fight, and therefore

for our country. All the work, all the generations of work to get here, in fact, - got us here. It worked."

That is what I ask all of our people. Please don't think about the consequences; please don't think about the results, but fight. Fight with the knowledge that the light of your fight will live long enough even after you are gone. Know that we stand on the side of justice and equality and our fight is actually changing the world; saving lives of so many of us. Our fight will still be there when we are gone knocking on people's heart and appealing to their humanity and still changing the world.

I so wish, this happens in India too because it would change some other kids life.





★ Chandigarh held its first LGBT Pride Walk on March 15th. Organised by Saksham Trust, the march was attended by over 200 people.

★ Justice JS Verma, who headed the government-appointed committee to frame a tough law to tackle crime against women in the wake of the December Delhi gangrape incident, died on April 22nd. In his report, Justice Verma had recommended teaching about sexuality in school curriculum and also having laws to tackle violence against transgender.

★ A Facebook post by bewakoof.com after a cricket match between IPL teams Royal Challengers Bangalore and Pune Warriors that called gays as rapists went viral. After outrage expressed by the LGBT community and others for trivializing rape, bewakoof.com removed the post and apologized for it as well.

★ Shakuntala Devi, a mathematician, passed away on April 21. Her book, "the World of Homosexuals", published in 1977, is considered remarkable for its progressive approach.

★ Santhi Soundarajan, who was stripped of her 800m silver medal after failing a gender test at the 2006 Doha Asian Games and was later forced to work as a labourer in a brick kiln, has finally been given the opportunity to realise her dream of becoming a qualified athletics coach as the Central Govt. relaxed the criteria of gender verification before allowing her to pursue a diploma course at the National Institute of Sports, Patiala.

G-NEWS: World



★ UN has asserted that LGBT Rights are human rights. In a short anti-homophobia video released over Youtube, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon says, "You are not alone, LGBT rights are human rights, together we will build a world that is free and equal."

★ For the first time, transgenders contested elections in Pakistan.

★ Uruguay, New Zealand and France legalized same-sex marriages in their country, taking the tally of countries that allow gays and lesbians to marry to 14.

★ Singapore High Court dismissed a legal challenge filed by a gay couple Gary Lim and

Kenneth Chee against Sec 377A that criminalises homosexuality in the country. The judge said, "While anal and oral sex in private between a consenting man and woman is considered "acceptable," the same conduct was "repugnant and offensive" when carried out between two men".

★ Jason Collins has become the first NBA player to come out openly as gay. In a story that appeared in the May 6, 2013, issue of Sports Illustrated Collins wrote, "I'm a 34-year-old NBA center. I'm black. And I'm gay."

★ Producers of the TV series Glee have announced that it would continue for at least two more seasons.



Is It A Gay Gene Or Epigene?

Bharathi explains to you the recent study that focuses on epigenes instead of a 'gay gene'

Last December one of the research focused on finding the basis of homosexuality proposed a new model based on Epigenetics. Genes are responsible for passing on favourable traits to the future generations according to Darwin. The search for gay gene has confounded many scientists for years and the results have not been conclusive. Now this new theory focuses on something called epigenetics.

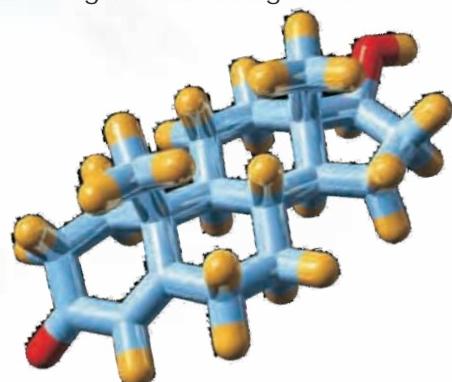
Epigenetics are actually a part of the human makeover. Think of them as a switch which turns on or off a specific expression of genes. Now according to this theory, when there is a foetus (male or female) inside the womb and the opposite sex hormone levels are very high, these epi markers protect the foetus from over exposure to their opposite sex hormone. If the male sex hormone testosterone is present in high concentrations and there is a female foetus in the womb, these epimarkers protect the girl baby from over exposure to testosterone. But once the baby is delivered, these epimarkers should actually disappear or are switched off as they have no further function to do and that is what happens in a majority of situations.

Sometimes they may not switch off and are then passed on to the next generation in an 'on' position.

If the grown up girl passes on these epimarkers to her son, these markers which were supposed to protect her from overexposure of testosterone is now actually stopping the male son not to adequately react to testosterone.

These epimarkers, which have been passed to him from his mother in an 'on' position, may now contribute to him being gay. The same way a girl may get the switched on epimarkers from her father and might prevent her from reacting normally to female sex hormone estrogen. What makes these epimarkers to remain 'on' may be due to environmental factors, thus it might be nature and nurture which might make a person gay.

In simple words, mothers may pass some enzymes to their sons that might make them gay and fathers might pass some enzymes to their daughters which might make them lesbians. This theory is yet to be tested on human model, but scientists are confident that it might be feasible as the mathematical model looks promising. Until there is concrete proof, the debate whether being gay is nature or nurture will go on for a long time.



KASHISH Returns

Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, India's biggest LGBT film fest, is all set to enthrall the audiences in Mumbai. Since its debut in 2010, KASHISH has become not only a festival that spotlights LGBTQ cinema, but is also a landmark festival in Mumbai's cultural event calendar. KASHISH 2013 will be held from May 22-26 2013 at Cinemax Versova, Andheri West and from May 23-25, 2012 at Alliance Française de Bombay, Marine Lines.

This year, the theme of the festival is `Towards Change'. The festival this year will make a special effort to program films and have panel discussions that not only deal with gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender themes, but also those that relate to families and friends of LGBT people. "The growth and spread of KASHISH has been phenomenal. We are in our fourth year and there are a lot more expectations. It will be a challenge to ensure that we balance awareness and entertainment to provide a diverse range of programs for our audiences. KASHISH is no more just a film



Morgan, a movie being screened at Kashish

festival, but an annual cultural experience, and we hope to live up to it," said festival director Sridhar Rangayan.

Many famous personalities, including Anupam Kher, Resul Pookutty, Renuka Shahane, Parvin Dabas, and Mona Ambegaonkar had graced the festival last year, and this year too, Kashish promises to be star studded event. The festival will screen 132 films from 40 countries with more number of features and documentaries than ever from countries as diverse as Uganda, Serbia, Iran, Slovakia, Pakistan and China.



A still from THE INVISIBLE MEN, a documentary being screened at Kashish

A Filmy Bonanza

Two back to back film festivals in Chennai provide audiences with a movie bonanza

This year Chennai has not one, but two LGBT film-festivals, spaced a month apart. Collectively, the organizers hope to offer Chennai audiences a bonanza of at least twice as much content as in 2012.

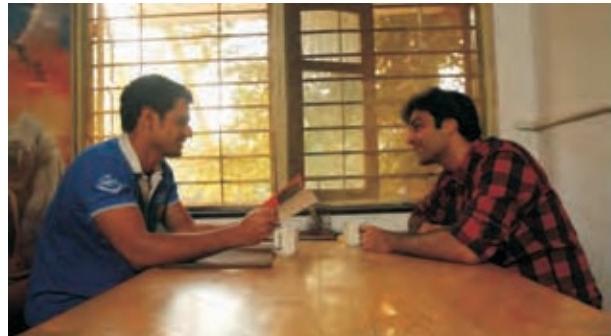
Chennai Dost, a support group for LGBTs in Chennai, in collaboration with Alliance Française de Madras, is organizing Chennai Rainbow (LGBT) Film Festival 2013 from 7th– 9th June. The theme of Chennai Rainbow Film Festival this year is "Pride Sans Prejudice" and it aims to reach a wide spectrum of audience, cutting across the class difference and providing a platform where everyone can



come together with pride sans prejudice to celebrate diversity. The film festival will screen LGBT themed short-films, documentaries, feature-length films, paintings, photographs and a panel discussion.

Just a month later, Orinam- an LGBT and ally group that has been working since 2003 to create social, support and cultural spaces for the community; and to enhance public awareness and understanding of LGBT issues- is organizing **Reel Desires:** Chennai International Queer Film Festival 2013. The festival is being held from July 11 to 13, 2013, in partnership with Goethe Institute/ Max Mueller Bhavan, the German cultural center in Chennai.

Reel Desires is the latest in series of queer-themed film-festivals that have been organized in Chennai over the past decade. In November 2004, volunteers of Orinam (then called MP) helped SAATHII and Alliance Francaise of Madras curate the city's first gender-sexuality film festival. A highlight of that festival was the screening of the Bengali docu-drama 'Piku Bhalo Acchey' (Piku is Fine) followed by a Q&A with Kolkata-based director Dr Tirthankar



Guha Thakurta who had been invited to Chennai for the festival. That event triggered tremendous interest among the city's emerging queer communities in film, and set the stage for subsequent queer film festivals in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2012; as well as inclusion of films with queer content in mainstream film festivals.

This July, Orinam and co-organizing groups hope to use the interest generated by Reel Desires to raise awareness and discussion of issues impacting the LGBT community; and to lend visibility to locally available resources for sensitization, peer-support, and crisis intervention. Focus areas to be addressed as part of Reel Desires 2013 will include the need for stigma-free inclusion of LGBT people within our families, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, workplaces and the media/film industry. Bundled with the film festival will be a panel discussion on workplace diversity, featuring representatives of local and multinational companies that have implemented LGBT-friendly policies for staff recruitment and retention. Submissions have already been received from countries covering most continents, and the review/selection process is ongoing, with a 12-member panel of volunteers (LGB, trans and straight).



R.I.P. Shakuntala Devi:

Math-Evangelist and Ally of the Queer Community

Born in 1939, Shakuntala Devi rose to fame as a computational wizard at the age of five, and went on to achieve international acclaim as a mathematician. In 1977, the same year she extracted the 23rd root of a 201-digit number mentally, she also published "The World of Homosexuals", typically the last book to be mentioned in any biographic account of hers.

The book, consisting of interviews with homosexual men in India and a same-sex couple in Canada, is remarkable for its progressive approach to the subject. Twenty four years after the publication of this book, Shakuntala Devi, speaking out in Vismita Gupta-Smith's documentary "For Straights Only" [2001], said that the book was motivated by her marriage to a homosexual man. The marriage was a failure, but instead of reacting in a homophobic manner, she felt the need to look at the subject of homosexuality more closely and try to understand it. In her words, "My only qualification for writing this book is that I am a human being."

Featured in the book are interviews with "Venkata Subramaniam", a senior company executive who narrates his self-discovery of homosexuality, and the double existence he plans to lead with his same-sex lover and the woman his parents have chosen for him. Another interview is with a young man who has come out to his parents by way of explaining why he does not want to get married to a woman. She has also interviewed Srinivasa Raghavachariar, head-priest of the Srirangam temple in Tiruchirapally district, who opines that same-sex lovers must have been opposite-sex lovers in a previous birth.

Here are some quotes from Shakuntala Devi's book.

"Immorality does not consist in being different. It consists in not allowing others to be so. It is not the individual whose sexual relations depart from the social custom who is immoral – but those are immoral who would penalize him for being different. A law-abiding citizen who



respects the rights and dignities of others, if he is made to suffer merely for deviating from the conventional norm, is not the offender – he is the victim."

"What we know is that many decent, intelligent, moral and apparently normal people find their own sex more exciting than the opposite sex. They are found in all walks of life and in all professions. If homosexuals want to live within the discipline of society, what does the society expect them to do? Live a life of total celibacy?"

"An important question that arises in the thinking members of society is - must then these millions who already exist and tens of millions yet to be born be condemned to misery, loneliness and degradation?

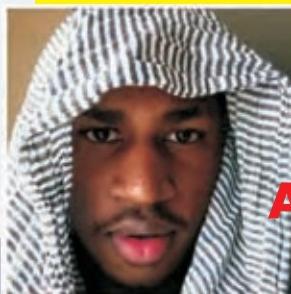
"The time is overdue now, when rather than pretending that homosexuals don't exist, or hoping to eradicate them by the sheer weight of disapproval or prison sentences, we face the facts squarely in the eye and find room for them so that they can live unfettered and unmolested, and make their contribution to the common good of community"

"On this level nothing less than full and complete acceptance will serve – not tolerance and not sympathy."

This tribute was originally published on Orinam.net and is being reproduced with permission



Brown and Gay in America: A Sit Down with Ravi Batra



André Jennings

a student of University of Maryland University College and a gay South Asian activist, talks to Ravi Batra, a fellow South Asian gay activist and graduate from Georgia State University about what it means to be gay and South Asian in America



Ravi Batra,

I met dashingly handsome and gorgeous eyed About a year ago on twitter. Little did I know; he would become one of my closest friends. We met on a warm summer's day, sat down over some homemade chai and a warm batch of jalebi, and had a great chat about being gay and South Asian American.



André : Namaste Ravi, tell me and the readers a little bit about you!

I am Ravi Batra, 24, born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. I recently graduated from Georgia State University with a biology degree and plan to pursue a career in healthcare.

Ravi : I ultimately would like to become a physician assistant and for now I am going to nursing school to become a registered nurse. I am a humanitarian and activist and hope to see change in my life.

André : How do you feel the LGBT community treats South Asian gays?

Well, I have only encountered racism once with this "twink-ish" talking about curry and going back to my country. And this friend who I think was just joking around but comparing me to a Muslim. I know he is welcoming of all faiths and cultures though so I know he was joking. However, I think that it has to do with how they were raised and not that they were LGBT.

Ravi :

André : Makes sense, do you think it's harder being gay and Desi in America than India?

No, I think it's a lot easier actually due to the fact that in India, people are even more harshly discriminated. Not saying everywhere, it is mostly the rural areas. However, I think gays in India are probably a lot different than South Asian Americans who are gay,

Ravi : because it's a different culture there. Here there is a melting pot of cultures interacting, whereas there it is primarily just Indian culture having influences.

André : What was your coming out experience, and did you experience any backlash from friends or family?

(You can show my video if you want for that) I don't know if backlash is the right word. My mom was really upset and still struggles with it, but she is starting to respect it. I

Ravi : think my dad is supportive though for the most part. We don't really talk about it much but. My mom is more comfortable with it, but my dad says he doesn't understand it and is not trying too.

André : Working with HRC (Human Rights Campaign) , what advice would you give other gay desis to become comfortable with their sexuality and coming out?

I would ask them to seek out other gay desis and understand that they're not alone. At first I felt very unique (sometimes I still do) in being the whole South Asian American

Ravi : who is gay. There were other gay Indians that I knew about but they were either immigrants to America or more into Indian subculture than me. Then I started exploring more and meeting other individuals similar to myself and was able to discuss our experiences and it helped me a lot.

In the media, we rarely see a South Asian gay male, how do you

André : feel about this?

It is true, but in the media we barely see South Asian at all. They are just now

Ravi : beginning to come up with Aziz Ansari and Jay Sean, to list just a couple. So although it sucks that the diversity is still little, I think that there is still some time.

André : Do you agree or disagree with the statement "Being gay is not for white people, being gay doesn't make less a south Asian!"

Lol, I don't understand, what does being gay have to do with race? Although some races have their LGBT sub community from sub culture, I don't think the statement is referring to that.

It was a statement by another desi writer, he said all he saw was white gay

André : males and felt that he being desi and gay wasn't right because of what he saw on TV.

Ravi : Ooh okay, I say no, I never felt that way

André : Do you feel being American and South Asian we have a harder time with self perception and body image? Being a little bit more hairy etc..?

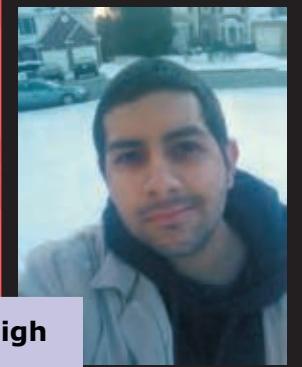
OMG!! Yes, for the longest time. I felt like I needed to shave my body to get guys to like me. I felt like the media portrayed the "white skinny twink" as the preferred male of

Ravi : sexual interest. It wasn't until I started meeting people who are more communicative about their interest in hairy men, and getting a scruff for a few months then. I realized that it was the media that portrayed that; and that I am beautiful the way I am. I don't need to shave or be underweight to find love.

André : OMG, I am going to start crying! You are very beautiful! Have you experienced more racism or hetero-sexism than homophobia for being gay and desi?

I haven't had much of a problem of either actually. I grew up in a diverse area. Although I was a minority for a few years at my middle and high school, there were other Indians. And there were one or two gays. I always met people, though they were gay I didn't feel

Ravi : any less great being who I am. When I came out in high school, I actually felt superior because I was unique and different. I was more a nerd than an outward gay guy. But I didn't experience much homophobia or hetero-sexism. When I got to Georgia State it was even better. Everyone at my school was so welcoming of me being gay.



André : André : Wow we have so much in common both of us came out in high school, but I did the whole desi move and said I was bi, but a few months after I came out as gay.

Ravi : Haha!! I did that too.

André : Haha really! It's an easy way out

Ravi : . Lol. Exactly!

André : Even after coming out do you feel the pressure to get married?

Ravi : Yes, very much so! I have to figure out how to avoid that.

André : Have you ever thought of marrying a lesbian? They have these dating websites in China for gay men and lesbians to marry for their family?

Ravi : Lol. It was a passing thought, as a joke, but not seriously. No! I want to marry a man. I want to show a man; my public commitment to our monogamous love.

André : Awww, I do want a big shaadi, with lots of colors and maybe an elephant or two. How would you like the future of gaysi to be?

I think I want the future of gay desis to be able to talk about homosexuality without

Ravi : taboo, for it to show up in movies not as a parody but genuine love and part of society. I want Indians, especially Hindus, to realize that Hinduism does not condemn homosexuality but welcomes love of all kinds.

André : Who is your favorite movie and actors?

Ravi : Hmm... favorite movies are Mean Girls, Easy A, Lol and Devil Wears Prada! Actress is I guess Emma Stone and Anne Hathaway.

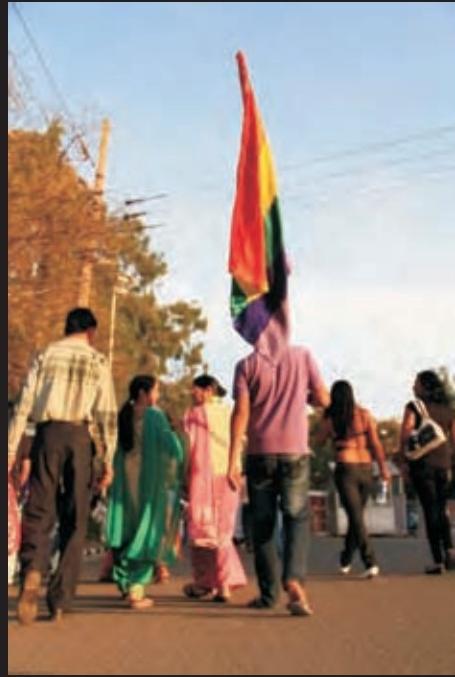
André : Thank you for your time, where can people contact you to know more about you?

Ravi : My Facebook, twitter, and tumblr are all zzravizz. And by email ravihrcAtlanta@gmail.com

Chandigarh LGBT Pride Walk 2013

Nearly 200 people walked in the first pride march held in Chandigarh on 15th March and organized by Saksham Trust
Pictures courtesy Saksham Trust











10 Grooming Tips

Rohan Noronha

**gives you grooming tips
to enhance your looks**

Yes, I know I have said it before that someone falling for your physical looks wouldn't be a keeper, but I didn't say, "Don't maintain yourself!!"

So here it is, I have 10 tips for you to maintain a lovely outlook, grooming et al my dearies.

Have you thought of letting your hair grow?

For those of you with a face shape that is asymmetric, long hair on you would make you yummy. Those with curled hair need to straighten, not many would look nice with curls on such a face shape. Go to a specialist you know who can read your face and hair

well, and they would know how to make the sexy you come out in no time. And don't forget to use wax, or hair mousse to style it up too. And for crying out loud, I don't want men with such face shapes having hair falling over their face, what have you got to hide?



Have you thought of a mature look?

Trust me, some teens and mid twenties something's don't look attractive at all, because gay men look for maturity even in kiddos, get the drift. So what you could do is, have short hair styles done, and couple that with a goatee or even stubble for that raw sexy look. Now listen up, you just need to look a little mature, which doesn't bring down your sex appeal.

Threading indeed is a boost

And it's not just the women doing that nowadays. I do it and I get compliments for my large eyes. Reshaping and tweezing them once a month would not allow stray hair to mess the facial features, your eyebrows would be defined and your eyes would look sexy. Ask the women at home or your hair stylist expert to do it for you. BUT DON'T MAKE IT TOO THIN.



Think about the hair on your face

We all shave our facial hair, some of us keep it, and some of us don't bother about it. I personally find men with stubble, very light stubble which is well managed YUMMY! Now don't wax your facial hair (ouch). If you want to know the right stubble to keep, look into the mirror and then look at the online magazines that deal with facial stubble styles, and choose one which you can manage and trim (at home) and then go for it. And no, just because your filmy hero wears one a certain way, chances are it wouldn't suit you.

Be the fashion, not a victim to it

Once again, just because your filmy idol wore those skinny jeans, it doesn't guarantee you looking fabulous in them. Check the season, the wellness and the styles of what would suit you the best and then dress accordingly. What you choose to wear should make you feel comfy and nice, and it should flatter you even if you have a belly.

Skin care routines should be maintained

1. Exfoliate
2. Moisturize
3. Facials
4. Face wash
5. Clay masks
6. Skin tightening regime once in two months
7. Eye cream
8. Use a sun block

And the list can go on, do you want me to tell you more?

Shun those glasses and wear contact lens, hair extensions if you need to, and highlights also do good, but bare minimum please.

For those who like using make-up

Go ahead and use it as much as you want, as long as you don't look colorfully dirty on your face. The make up should be moisturizer based, translucent, with a concealer and you should know how to use it. MEN WITH FACIAL HAIR, NO MAKE UP ALLOWED FOR YOU. Kajal and Surma look sexy on some eyes, not all.

Work it out and build that booty

Yes, if you like being fit, work it out at the gym or at home. Brisk exercises and lots of step jogging would do wonders for your body. You lose the flab and look super sexy, but flabby guys too with the right confidence look ravishing.

And finally, have confidence in yourself

If you don't trust and love yourself, don't expect me or anyone else to love you. Ok now Satin needs to leave, so catch you next time!! Alohaa!!





AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF REGION GOES PINK

{ With a little help from Olympic Gold Medalist and super spunk, aussie diver Matthew Mitcham }

Matt Mitcham gets up close and personal with the wildlife... Above Chris a deserted Cairns beach



CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA.

Move over Bali and The Caribbean - this city , which is the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef in Tropical North Queensland - has just flicked the pink switch and they're after your mantles as the best gay tropical vacation spots in the world.

The new website, (and it's destination marketing campaign) launched last weekend. Go2gay-Cairns.com is the first ever 'pink' site aimed at seducing Gay travellers from around the world to visit Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef. And there is a face - and smile - in the campaign that may be familiar to some, the incredible sexy, Aussie gold medallist diver Matthew Mitcham.

Cairns (already a favourite place for many Sydney locals to escape and recover after the annual Mardi Gras since it's only a 3 hour flight from Sydney) has the tropical climate and lifestyle that has attracted many LGBT to move to the region which has created a diverse vibrant gay community, which is proportionately large for a city of Cairns' size.

Granted, this little known city was recently listed in the 'Worlds 20 gayest beach towns and small cities (under 150,000 population)*... but what makes this tropical city at the top of Australia think it can take on some of the worlds iconic gay vacation destinations?

"Well we have everything gay travellers look for.... Hundreds of perfect palm fringed beaches (including a gay one!), a fun, gay friendly, safe destination - plus world class exotic experiences available nowhere else on earth - like the Great Barrier Reef and the world heritage listed Daintree Rainforest just to name two. Oh and did we mention it's the tropics... which means the guys don't wear much all year round " Laughs Jay Horne, creator of the Go2gayCairns.com website

"Also getting to Cairns couldn't be easier - there's no wasted travel time on unreliable connecting flights or boats from the closest airport - there is an international airport 2 minutes from the heart of the city with direct or one stop flights from around the world. Then you have your choice of 5 star hotels and island resorts, or gay run B&Bs, to Backpacker hotels" Jay continues.

Back to the super smile of Matthew Mitcham... He and his long term partner Lachlan spent a week in Cairns being photographed for the website, and although they are both from the same state as Cairns - Queensland - neither had visited Cairns before. (Queensland is a massive state nearly 7 times larger than the British Isles). They were amazed at the sights they were able to see, their highlight being a trip out the Great Barrier Reef and Green Island, just a 30 min boat ride from the city.

"The Reef was just spectacular- the coral was amazing and swimming with turtles just was absolutely breathtaking. Where else in the world could we do that and then be back in time for an afternoon swim at the Cairns Lagoon, then spend a balmy evening wandering the tree lined streets choosing our dinner venue!"

One look at the website will show travellers that there is certainly no a shortage of things to see and do in the region. "We wanted to showcase that we are really worth a visit.... And that every picture you take will be a post-card" Jay says.

Another interesting fact about the website is that it



Spend a day chillin with the locals at the lagoon, or get adventourous like Matt Mitcham and climb the iconic rainforest dome in the city centre



hasn't been created by some tourism honcho, or government body that just wants to cash in on the pink dollar. The website and campaign has been totally funded and bankrolled by Jay - using local gay companies for everything - from designers, models and photographers. "The only 'import' is Matthew Mitcham - we wanted this to be a gay website for gay men looking to travel, produced by gay men. Supporting and growing our local community is important to us - but we could resist luring golden boy Mitcham to the region to feature him in our campaign."

Does this mean that the government doesn't want gays to come to the region? - Definitely not. The Mayor and State Government parliament member for the region are both supportive of Go2gayCairns.com and their push to get gay travellers to visit

The website is full of informative gay specific details and great pictures for the gay traveller and is set to grow even more over the coming months.

" The website will make you want to come...." are Jays final word on the subject





6 MUST DO'S IN GAY CAIRNS

There's way more than six things but that's all that will fit on this page!

GET WET OUT
ON AND UNDER
THE GREAT
BARRIER REEF

No trip to the region is complete without a trip to the reef. There are so many ways to explore this natural wonder, snorkel, glass bottom boat, or scuba - whatever your heart desires.



EXPLORE THE WORLD FAMOUS, HERITAGE LISTED DAINTREE RAINFOREST

Just north of Cairns, where the Rainforest meets the reef, is the spectacular Daintree rainforest and its beaches. Explore it yourself or go on a guided tour.



DISCOVER YOUR
OWN TROPICAL
ISLAND AND
STAY THE NIGHT

Did we mention Cairns had tropical islands just off the coast? A quick boat ride will get you to many of these jewels of the great barrier reef. Stay the day or a week on a resort island



GET DOWN WITH
THE LOCALS
DURING CAIRNS
TROPICAL PRIDE
FESTIVAL

The festival is held in August every year with one of the highlights being the Splash pool party (Aug 17 2013) which draws a crowd from around Australia



SPEND THE DAY
EXPLORING THE
CITY, THEN CHILL
AT THE LAGOON

Shop the markets in the city, or Louis Vuitton or Prada if you prefer... Then take a dip with the locals in the huge saltwater lagoon that is the focus of the city



SEE THE SIGHTS
AND GET UP

Take a waterfall tour and see everthing from the massive thundering Barron falls, ancient gorges, to secluded secret swimming holes. (or if you're game enough white water raft over the tops)



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and join our community...
[facebook.com/qo2qaycairns](https://www.facebook.com/qo2qaycairns)



**follow us on twitter
@ GayCairns**

For more information contact Jay Horne at jay@go2gaycairns.com



Old Enough To Be Homosexual

Being a gay kid is hard, being a gay teen in India is even harder; but where are the LGBT teens?

Asks

Abhisehk Divyam

Being a gay kid is hard. Being a gay teen in India is probably even harder! As a gay teen who has been extremely content and confident about his sexuality, the most common reason why some people of the LGBT community avoided or shunned me, was my age. For some incomprehensible reason, many people (even gay people) find it strange that a kid is gay. I have been a part of the general online gay culture (mostly Orkut and Facebook), since I was 13. My primary goal - To find someone to talk to, someone who was like me, and someone who would listen. I was not confused, or scared of my sexuality. I was just alone. Isolated. And my battle was against that isolation. But my age was always a barrier. I am 17 now. My age is still a barrier.

Over short time I have seen life, the most absurd idea that I came across was that "someone who is not an adult cannot be homosexual".

But the weirder part was that this came from many people who themselves are gay. The idea behind this seemed that since the age of consent is 18 years, there should also be a lower limit of an age to be homosexual.



I have known people who have come to terms with their sexuality only after sexual experiences, but equating one's sexuality solely with sexual experiences had left me in an acute crisis of identity.

I didn't need to have sex to realise what my sexuality was. I knew I liked boys, even before I knew peeing isn't the only use of my penis. I knew I liked men, even before I realised that the society expects me to like girls.

But my acceptance of my sexuality was seen by many as a teenage perversion. The idea of a gay kid confidently discussing and vigorously trying to discover and understand his sexuality scared people, or may be worried them. The moment anyone discovered my age, they would go silent,

Gay teens - We exist and we are as gay as you can imagine

shoo me away, keep their distance. I wanted to talk with people who I thought were like me, but I discovered that discussing sexuality with a teen is considered a taboo by many men.



Being a homosexual has always been portrayed as an adult stuff- not something kids should play with or talk about.

I have been asked many a times to "keep the gay out" of me, to stay away from gay issues and ideas till I was an adult. But how could I? How could I push away the gay boy inside me? The gay boy in my body was not a separate entity. It was me. Just the way, you couldn't separate the taste of rice and milk in *kheer*, I could not separate my sexuality from who I was. It was an integrated part of my personality and my identity.

But my experiences have made me question a lot of things regarding the queer teens in India.

Where are the LGBT teens?

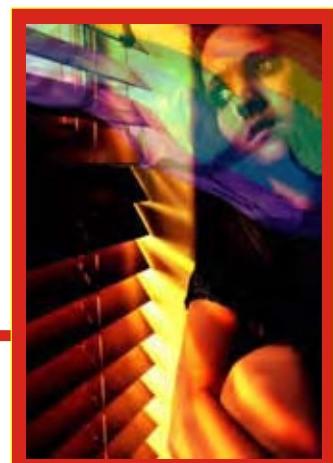
Anyone who suggests that gay teens do not exist or are a rarity needs to get his facts correct. I have seen, met and talked to so many boys of my age and younger who identify themselves as gay or bisexual. And the identity is strong. And I believe the teenage LGBT population of India is far, widespread and growing. With the ease of internet availability, information is at the tip of the fingers. There is also a greater hope of acceptance today, which makes teenagers less inhibited by their own sexuality.

But while the LGBT movement in India has taken a beautiful young shape, the queer teens still find a hard time identifying themselves with the community. The younger queer population finds it hard trying to head butt their way into the general LGBT community and find a space for themselves because of the prevalent idea that sexuality is in the sphere of adults. The teenagers are therefore still invisible even within the LGBT community.

I am 17 now. I have been on a quest of discovering and understanding my sexuality since the last 5-6 years. Now that I stand on the verge of the fabled adulthood that everybody talked about, I look back and try to list the things that have changed. I obviously have become more mature in body and mind. But does my transition into adulthood have any effect on my perception of my own sexuality? Not at all! I was gay when I was 10. I was gay when I was 13. Luckily enough, I am still gay.

But when it comes to gay teens, some people have asked, 'Are we old enough to be homosexuals?'

Let me tell you. Gay teens - We exist and we are as gay as you can imagine.



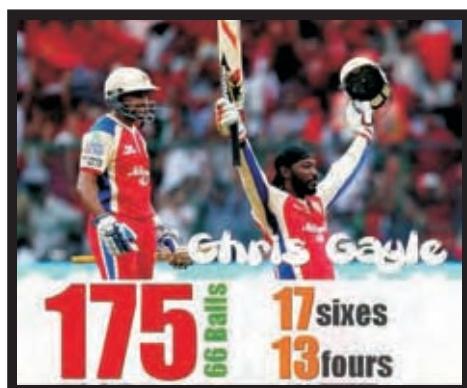
I **The idea of a gay kid confidently discussing and vigorously trying to discover and understand his sexuality scared people, or may be worried them**

Gays, Cricket and Rape: Why It Was Wrong to Link Them All

Sukhdeep Singh writes about all that was wrong with the gay rape joke

India is a country where cricket triumphs all other religions. Cricket is a religion in itself in India and Sachin is often referred to as God of this religion. It wasn't surprising then that the whole country burst out in hysteria when Chris Gayle smashed Pune Warriors with his batting skills and made a whopping 175 in just 66 balls. Every cricket match is generally followed by a flood of cricket related updates on my timeline, and this match was no different. But there was something special this time. Gayle has the word 'gay' in his name, and so, like Bollywood (which loves to use gay caricatures to induce laughter) Indians lapped up this opportunity of poking fun at gays and the defeated team and soon there were various posts on Facebook and other media.

But this time, it did not just involve some gay bashing, but tended to relate another very serious issue that has been plaguing the Indian society - RAPE.



A gag posted on Facebook by bewakoof.com read, "If a man rapes another man, he is called gay; If a man rapes 11 men, he is called GAYle".

There were multiple problems in this single sentence. Apart from its very homophobic and stupid tone, it made rape look like an achievement. And the other disturbing fact was that it had received over 18000 likes and 15000 shares, which means, so many thousands of people either actually considered rape as a badge of honour to be conferred upon a person who has smashed his opponents black and blue; or; consider rape too trivial to joke about.

The post very certainly gave out an impression where rape was some sort of a very masculine thing and thus talks about raping not just one, but 11 men!! There is another underlying current to it. While women are often considered to be physically weaker, men are considered physically strong, and thus, raping of 11 men would be a super macho thing that would illustrate someone's physical strength (in this case Gayle's). In whichever way you see this, the message seems that rape is some sort of an achievement in a man's life and thus Gayle's powerful inning could only be appreciated by equating it with rape, which is also a lot about power.

Sukhdeep Singh writes about all that was wrong with the gay rape joke

This on the other hand talks more about the prevailing mentality in India, the rape culture that we are all part of without even realising about it, and could also throw some insights into why such high cases of sexual violence occur in this country.

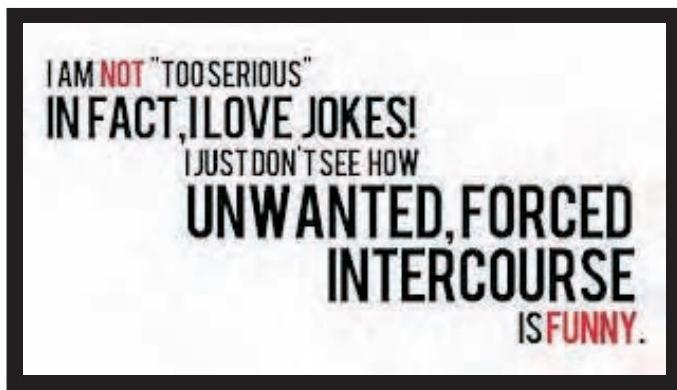
On the homophobic side of it, the "joke" not only called a man who rapes another man as gay, it totally seems to look at being gay or homosexuality as nothing beyond sexual abuse. In a country where people still have huge misinformation about homosexuality and have their own misconceptions, this gay rape joke was not only ignorant of facts, but highly misleading too!!

Even after Gaylaxy reported about the gay rape joke equating gays with rapists and trivializing the issue of rape, a number of people have been commenting that it was just a joke and that nothing much should be read into it. That we "lacked a sense of humour". I don't understand, how can someone enjoy being called a rapist? Would you enjoy if I use rapist as an appellation for you?



Would you feel honored if I called out to you as, "Rapist XYZ... instead of Mr. XYZ"? What is so funny about rape that you could actually make a joke of it? That too when every single day there are reports of rape and gang rapes that fill the newspapers, when a 5 year old child has foreign objects inserted inside her. Would you also find it funny to go to someone's funeral and then try and make fun about the person who died? Or was it the idea that even a man could be sexually assaulted by another man that you found funny?

Harish Iyer was quoted in Mid Day as saying, "I am scared to even imagine, what would have been the reaction of people if someone wrote, 'If a man rapes one girl he is a man. If he rapes 11 girls he is alpha male.' But just change the gender of the victim and this will be perceived as funny. Rape is a reality for all sexes." Now tell me, do you find that funny too?



FAMILY

Davneet Narang ponders whether he should leave his parents and live a separate independent life where he can be openly gay or live with his parents and try to convince them

So here I sit, dreaming about a very small cozy room that I would return to after a day full of hard-work at some tiny restaurant. I won't mind waiting on people or washing their dishes, because I would get paid for it, and that money would feed my little stomach and clean my few clothes, and yeah, pay the rent of my small room. Simple, undemanding lifestyle.

I won't have a family to worry about. They would have kicked me out when I told them the truth about my orientation. Easy. I would live alone and for myself. Play the music I like. Wear the clothes I like. May be I'll get a loving boyfriend (let's suppose that person would be working as a chef in the same restaurant). I won't need lots of money, just a peaceful night in the arms of the person who would be my life-partner. Beautiful life, won't it be?

And then I wake up from my day dream, because an old uncle walks into the shop and stares point-blankly at one T-Shirt after another. I'm taking care of my father's garment boutique, while he is busy with some important bank-work.

I ask the old man angrily, what does he want? He asks me to wait as he goes through the display. Too slow. I lose my hopes of converting him into a customer, when suddenly he asks for "that white one".

I pull out the pathetic dirty piece, remove the hanger and literally order him to try it. With shaking hands he puts it through his neck. I look at the white hair popping through the neck of the tee and feel guilty. I help him pull it through and down his chest and then politely ask him to check himself in the mirror. He has no company, it's my duty to praise him for the choice and remark

on the fitting. Happily he asks me to pack it. Oh, that was fast!





After I have helped him out of the T-Shirt and packed it up, he haggles for a mere 40 rupees discount. We both settle at 20 less. He pays me and picks his bags with shivering hands. I wonder with pity: "Why is no one with him to help him out with the shopping?" And then it struck me. If I am alone in my small cozy room enjoying myself, my father will also be shopping alone. There would be no one to compliment his choice. He would be paying someone with shaking hands. The picture was not pleasing to imagine.

Will it not make more sense if I stay with my parents, get a well-paying job, support them in their old age, and simultaneously help them to understand my different orientation? Won't it be awesome if I don't run away and if I face my life courageously? So what if they don't agree to my orientation or to my male lover? I can continue patiently to convince them. But I won't leave them. It's neither their fault nor mine.

Suppose I do get a good job, a decent salary so that my parents have a comfortable life in their old age... maybe then I will be free of duty, may be then my conscience will allow me to run off to my silent simple lonely lifestyle.

No, no, even then they will want me because they are too emotionally dependent on me. All parents are. At the end of day, they all love their kids, no matter what orientation. It's just that they need exposure and time to heal from the shock.

And after all, won't it be nicer for the image of queer world if I live with my parents and convert them to my side and then may be even get a good guy as their son-in-law. We all will live with colourful pride. At family functions, we will be respected as an actual couple! May be then I will have done what I'm born to do- "Live like a true Queer and a true Singh".

In that case it won't matter to me if the job I'm doing is not of my liking, because if will be having my family, my boy-friend and myself - my true self. With that beautiful end in mind, it all seems well.

In that case it won't matter to me if the job I'm doing is not of my liking, because if will be having my family, my boy-friend and myself - my true self. With that beautiful end in mind, it all seems well.



The Farce called “Traditional” Marriage

Sukhdeep Singh takes on the opponents of marriage equality, who have been calling for the preservation of traditional marriage

The world seems to be on a roll at legalizing same-sex marriages, or “gay marriage” if that is what you would like to call it. French Government has legalised it, and the previous month Uruguay and New Zealand too legalized it, taking the count to 14. But anti-gay sentiments have also been running high, with widespread protests being organized in France, leading to even violence.

The opponents of course are up in arms to save the “traditional” marriage that is so much under threat from “gay” marriage. You see, marriage, traditionally, has been a tool of oppression, an institution through which sadistic people have derived great joy in forbidding others the right to decide who they can spend their life with.

Marriage was designed to control and subdue women, to give men control over the bodies of women and restrict them to the boundaries of four walls, to imprint upon the minds of women that their sole purpose is to tend to the needs of a man, whether sexual or otherwise.

That is the reason many countries still don't have laws against marital rape, and Indian Government, despite strong recommendations by the Justice Verma Committee, chose to totally ignore the matter and remain silent, and so has the media in the country which remained more concerned about the age of consensual sex being kept at 16 instead of 18 in the proposed anti-rape bill, rather than talk about the sexual violence that many “traditionally” married women face in the country.

“Traditional” marriage is also a lot about who you cannot marry. So, if a boy and girl belong to different religion, they cannot marry (until one of them converts to the others religion, which most often is applied on the girl).





Sukhdeep Singh takes on the opponents of marriage equality, who have been calling for the preservation of traditional marriage

If the two of them belong to the same religion, but different regions/cultures; you cannot marry. If the boy and girl belong to the same religion, region/culture but different castes, you cannot marry. And finally, if you belong to even the same caste, and same "gotra" or village, guess what, you again cannot marry!! See, traditional marriage is not just about a man marrying a woman; it is so much more than that. It is about oppression and denial.

Traditional marriage is also about producing heirs and propagating the gene pool (by a male child of course!) It doesn't matter if the traditional family has 5-7 children (again, for the want of a male child or for other cultural/religious reasons) and cannot feed them properly or fend for them properly. The purpose of marriage must be fulfilled.

Marriage, traditionally, has been a tool of oppression, an institution through which sadistic people have derived great joy in forbidding others the right to decide who they can spend their life with.

Now when you talk about same-sex marriage or "marriage equality", what you are essentially doing is robbing the institution of marriage of all these things. After all, in a gay marriage, if two men are going to marry each other, who will be oppressed then? Or in case of lesbians marrying, who the "oppressor" will be then? And would it then mean that men (or women) of different castes/religions/regions could also marry? And if everyone could marry, then what happens to all the restrictions of who one cannot marry?

These are of course grave concerns that the traditionalists and conservatives have about preserving the "traditional" marriage. How could they give away such an important tool of oppression and let you re-define it and strip them of the sadistic joys that they derive from it.



Searching For The Land Over The Rainbow

Even though he has moved to America to live an open life, **Bharathi** writes that he loves the small town he grew up in but cannot return back and live an honest life there.

I am sure every gay person has heard of Judy Garland's *Somewhere over the rainbow*- the gay anthem of all time. Though it was sung in 1939, it is still our anthem because it talks about a magical and mystical land.

Somewhere over the rainbow there is a land that I heard of once in a lullaby.

Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue and the dreams that you dared to dream - really do come true.

We all are searching for that land over the rainbow not realizing that we are being driven to exile from our own mother lands.

It pains me to be an outsider. It pains me that my own family will never accept me for who I am. It pains me to think that I can never return to the place I was born and raised. The small town where I grew up and spent most of my life is out of bounds to me.

The place which I still call home will never be a home for me because of who I am. I still resent those small minded people who care mostly about what others think rather than living happily.

It pains me to think that because of those people I will never be back home.

The truth is I still love that small town, the town where I grew up. That is where my childhood is. Sure, I do wish I was born in a much progressive place where I did not have to hide who I was. But even beyond all that resentment that small town is my town. I love those streets where I can walk even with my eyes closed.

My family is never going to accept me. But before I come out I want to show them the world is changing. May be in my small town I might never live with dignity but there are lots of places in this world where I can be respected, have a family and be happy. I so wish I didn't have to show them a strange foreign land. I will be in a new city where I may never find another soul to show love and compassion like my family. But I can be myself, part of a crowd, not the different one anymore. I won't have to look over my shoulders every time I walk to see if there is a familiar face that might recognize me.

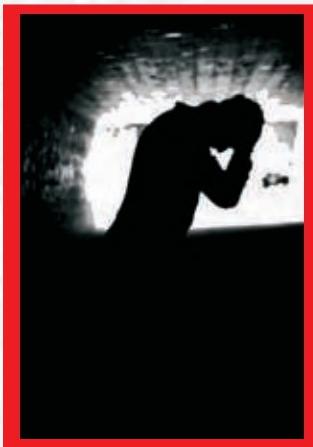
It pains me to think that I can never return to the place I was born and raised.... The place which I still call home will never be a home for me because of who I am.

Searching For The Land Over The Rainbow

It pains me to think that someday in the near future, I will be so afraid to even go out and be in those streets where I played, where I spent my entire life. Yes it was hard and yes it was difficult growing up feeling like the only different person in the world. As much as I resent it I call that town my home. That small town taught me everything and made me who I am today.

I know even if I marry the love of my life legally here in America, my relationship has no legal standing in my own country and my town. My kids might never be able to walk those same streets where I grew up and that won't be because of choice but by compulsion of an ignorant intolerant society which wants to deny people happiness.

And that is what we are seeing happening in France. Even though the government has passed marriage equality, a few have succeeded in harvesting on the people's despair over the ruling government's failure to control the economy and channeled it into a fight against same sex marriage. It's just a matter of time before the people see same sex weddings, that they will be ashamed of their fight.



I know even if I marry the love of my life legally here in America, my relationship has no legal standing in my own country and my town.

In New Zealand when the government legalized same sex marriage, the people watching it broke into a traditional song about love and freedom. It was a poignant moment compared to France.

Even though we don't understand their language, the song moves us to tears. Because in the end, all of this is about legalizing love and making sure that the next generation of kids can live and walk in the streets of the small towns where their parents lived and fought for their rights. This fight is all about living a normal life where we won't be chased out of the towns and streets where we lived our whole life to strange countries and cities - just so we can marry the person we love.

It is happening all over the world and it will happen someday even in my own India. Until then we fight so that the land where we can live happily is not 'over the rainbow' but at our own small towns.

OPENED BUT CLOSED EYES

I open my eyes and look around. I feel a motion for the very first time; it lacks "commotion". The background keeps on changing; is there something else? Is it a force that keeps repelling me? It is something effusive, isn't it? I guess I need to be circumspect.

It's a snowy ground; funny thing I have never seen snow fall. I see him coming towards me. He smiles, and that smile makes my feet curl. It's like reliving puberty once again. His voice is rhetoric I have a feeling; he is very pragmatic. But what he makes me feel is abstruse even for myself. He has complete and undefined control all over me.

Funny thing; he says he gives a damn about me but somewhere I know that he is staid; it's just something that I feel within. I raise a hand, I want to touch him. The space between us is an iota; one that gets shorter and dissolves into oblivion.



I am on a rocky hill top; the sky is purple, a little red a little yellow. Sunset yes is beautiful and someone more beautiful is behind me. With a dexterous effort I look back, his eyes are conciliatory; I find some amount of credibility in them. I fall again as his expressions looks solicitous; I can extol it to the world that how strong this tension is. At the very act of closing my eyes for a blink; another jerk that pulls me as if all his concerns has suddenly become defunct.

This place is eminent, something I have never seen. It's nauseating, I am sick of everybody leaving me. I don't want him to leave me. He gives me a look and I feel squelched. I start feeling humiliation, ignominy and I see him vexed. He turns his back on me and I am now in the sea.

Should I be concerned as I know not how to swim? But I am relaxed, it's like euphoria; my life is vignette started with a sudden debunk and now has an audacity to end with no diligent proliferation. Here comes the light but I tend to close my eyes; yes I am awake from the slumber but will my life ever be the same again?

Manind Arora





LIVE TO
SEE YOUR LOVE

KILL GAY BULLYING NOT YOURSELF

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR LGBT

WEST BENGAL

THE PRATYAY GENDER TRUST

Contact person : Anindya Hajra
Address : 293 Jodhpur Park , Calcutta, Pin 700 068
Phone : 033 2464 1893

E-mail :
pratyaygendertrust@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras, MSM (particularly kotis)

DURBAR MAHILA SAMANWAYA COMMITTEE

Contact person : Mrinal Kanti Dutta
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Phone : 033 2543 7451 / 7560, +91-33 2530 3148
Email: dmsc@durbar.org

Website:
<http://www.durbar.org/>

Target populations : Female, Male and Transgender sex workers

SAATHII CALCUTTA

Contact person : Pawan Dhall, Chief Coordinator
Address : 229 Kalitala Main Road, Purbanchal (N), Kolkata Pin 700 064
Phone : 033 2484-4835
E-mail : saathii@yahoo.com / pawan30@yahoo.com
Website : www.saathii.org
Target populations : MSM in general, male sex workers, transgender people, bisexuals

Sappho

Contact person : Malavika
Address : 11A Jogendra Gardens(South),Ground Floor, Kolkata, Pin 700 078
Phone : 033 2441 9995

Email: malvi99@hotmail.com , sappho1999@rediffmail.com

Website:

<http://sapphokolkata.org/>

Target Population : Lesbians and bisexual women

Prantik Bongaon

Contact person : Niloy Basu
Address : C/o Niloy Basu, Peada Para, P.O. Bongaon, Pin 743 235
Phone : 91 3251 257 029, 9332254855
E-mail : ajnil@rediffmail.com / ajnil123@rediffmail.com

Target populations : Hijras, Kothis, MSM in general

Northern Black Rose

Contact person : Souvik Ghosal
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Phone : 91-9433009116

E-mail:
northenblack_rose@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras, Meitis, other sexual minorities,

Astitva Dakshin

Contact person : Debasish Mitra
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Phone : 91-9836185589, 9830837440

E-mail :
astitvadakshin@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : Hijras, Kothis

Madhya Banglar Sangram

Contact person : Arunava Nath
Address : Kazi Ali Aftab Vill. Goaljan, P.O. Radharghat, P.S. Berhampore

Phone: 91 9932760967, 9232694700
E-mail:

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SWIKRITI

Contact person : Rajarshi Chakraborty, Secretary

Address : 42/57 DumDum Road, Kolkata 700074

Phone : +91 9831743608, 9433009190

E-mail:
swikriti2003@hotmail.com

Target populations : Bisexual women, lesbians, MSM in general, transgender people

PEOPLE LIKE US (PLUS)

Contact person : Agniva Lahiri
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Phone : 033 2402 9305
E-mail : pluskolkata@gmail.com

Target populations : Support group for young gender variants

SWAPNIL

Contact person : SUMAN RUDRA

Address : Kotalhat Dist-Burdwan, P.O. Burdwan, Pin 751015, West Bengal

Phone : 09932241372

E-mail :
swapnil_burdwan@yahoo.co.in

Target populations : MSM & TG Groups

MAHARASHTRA

Samapathik Trust, Pune

Contact person : Bindumadhav Khire

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